



Colm Keane shares his insights on life, death, and “the light”

by David Stang

Soon after his son Sean’s untimely death at age 26, Colm Keane, an Irish journalist and author, became insatiably curious about death and the afterlife, deciding then to research and write exclusively on that topic. Five of his books dealing with spiritual subjects have been national best sellers. In his latest book, *Heading For The Light*, Keane explores 10 different dimensions of the near-death experience, including contacts with the Supreme Being, love in the light, encounters with heaven and hell, and the keys to the kingdom. While most paranormal writers choose to phrase dispassionate and detached descriptions of altered state phenomenology, Keane comes directly to grips with the existential and spiritually transformative dimensions of such experiences.

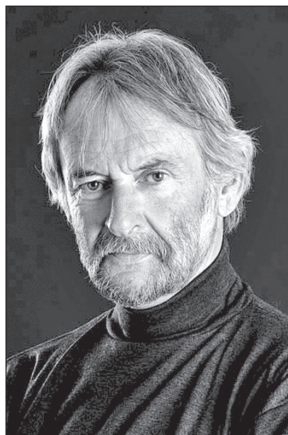
A graduate of Trinity College Dublin, Keane attended Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., receiving an M.A. degree in economics. He was then employed in Ireland as a television broadcaster, winning a Galaxo Fellowship for European science writers, and later as a radio reporter and producer, receiving a Jacob’s Award in 1988 for his productions. Many of his early interviews were with musicians and footballers. In all, he has authored 25 books.

Keane’s interest in death and what follows dates back to September 1990, when he read about a remarkable NDE in an article he found himself coming back to over the years. However, it wasn’t until Sean’s death in 2007 that he began his own nationwide search for other such stories. His exhaustive research and writings have entailed face-to-face interviews with hundreds of Irish men and women who have died and come back to life to tell their story in either the flesh or in spirit. In addition to *Heading for the Light*, his books include *Going Home*, *We’ll Meet Again*, *The Distant Shore*, and *Forewarned*.

A number of those interviewed by Keane had visions of Padre Pio, a Capuchin friar who received the stigmata and was later canonized by the Catholic Church. Though Italian, Padre Pio has had a special relationship with the Irish people. This prompted Keane to write two books about this saintly man

– *Padre Pio: The Irish Connection* and *Padre Pio: The Scent of Roses*.

Noteworthy also is Keane’s unearthing biographical data regarding the Sixth Century Irishman St. Fursa, who died, had an NDE in which he was shown the glory of heaven and the horrors of hell, then came back to life in order to preach about these first-hand experiences for the remainder of his life. Keane has also written about two Eighth Century Irishmen: St. Adamnan, who came from Donegal and had similar visions of the two best-known afterlife destinations then wrote his tale about them. The other character was a nobleman and knight from Cashel by the name of Tundale who had an NDE in which he witnessed an extraordinarily comprehensive vision of afterlife natural beauties. The following interview questions and answers consist of email exchanges with Colm Keane.



Keane

In “Going Home” you mentioned the resistance of clergy to your topic: what happens when you die? You indicated that some churchmen advised you that it is a mystery and it is best to leave it at that. What other reasons do you suspect may be behind the tendency of churchmen to run away from discussing the matter? Have you detected any recent opening up on their part to consider the subject?

“A few years ago, I spoke to a priest who said that 95 percent of his colleagues didn’t believe in God. It may sound like he was joking, but he wasn’t. I have often wondered whether the clergy sometimes become worn down by the bureaucracy and routine of their work and lose sight of their spiritual vocation. Mysteries are often the last refuge of the disillusioned and jaded!

“In fairness, some priests, and especially nuns, have been highly supportive of my work and intrigued by my conclusions. They are right to be so, as the near-death experience and religious belief are really not far apart. It is my belief that many of the traditions and fundamentals of religion find their roots in near-death accounts – the departure from the body, the judgement, the meeting with a Supreme Being, the sense of love, and virtually every tenet

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INTERVIEW

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espoused in sacred texts.

"I often compare the various religions to the light emerging through a stained-glass window. Each colour we see – blue, red, yellow, and so on – represents a different faith. They may all look different from the front, but behind the window is a light – the source of illumination. This is the light of all creation, the essence of what we are and where we go to when we die. It surprises me how those of a religious persuasion don't always make the connection."

Based upon all your interviews and related research, what do you think happens to us when we die?

"I am certain that something departs the body at the point of death and moves to a new existence.

I am also convinced that the flat-lining of the brain and the cessation of our heartbeat is not the end of the story.

Having studied an extensive body of literature – including almost all the scientific studies and sacred texts – and allied them with hundreds of near-death interviews, my conviction is that we survive in a realm of consciousness different from the world we currently live in but no less real because of that.

"I also believe that it is a world primarily dominated by peace and happiness, but for some people it features torment and distress. Explanations are beyond me, but I am also sure that we meet manifestations of deceased family and friends, undergo judgement, and find ourselves in the presence of a 'Supreme Being,' often referred to as God. Seven years ago, I would have laughed if somebody told me that they would be my current beliefs. But our survival after death is something I now firmly believe in and, from a personal point of view, it has changed my life."

In your chapter, "Heart Of The Matter" in The Distant Shore, you elaborate on the rich Celtic tradition in Irish spiritual consciousness dating back to the early Irish myths pertaining to "soul or spirit independent of the body." From your explanation it is fully understandable how and why the Irish feel so connected to the Other World. During your days as a student at Georgetown University living and studying with Americans, did you detect that the Yanks may generally lack that sixth sense, second sight and aptitude to discern the presence of spirits from the Other World that the Irish for millennia have so sparkingly exhibited?

"Societies that are comfortable with death, and

open to the possibility of eternal life, tend to have a greater store of afterlife folklore and report a larger number of spiritual encounters. In America, I found that death has become sanitised and remote, distanced from the daily reality of people's lives. It is a society where the process of dying is dominated by hospitals, funeral parlours and a general desire by people to extend life and deny their mortal nature.

"America has a fast-paced society driven by motion, ambition and noise. People are pressurised and their senses are dulled as a result. Although Ireland is fast replicating the American model, there are parts of the country – such as County Kerry in the south-west, and Donegal in the north-west – which are still rooted in the spirit and the soul. While some people in other parts of the country are similarly inclined, it is in these more remote regions that

"America has a fast-paced society driven by motion, ambition and noise. People are pressurised and their senses are dulled as a result."

the appreciation of afterlife issues has survived over time. Peace, solitude, silence and time for reflection – where a clock ticking marks

out time – have helped my researches immeasurably."

Did you feel when you were researching and writing your books on Padre Pio that you were dealing with a much profound magnitude of energy than might have been your experience, for example, with exploring deathbed visions?

"Although I am far from suggestible, many noticeable strange events were encountered by me during the research and writing of my two Padre Pio books. Examples always speak louder than words, and I will mention one. Seven years after writing my first book on Padre Pio, I decided to write another. I thought the best way to start would be by contacting a few people who had been helpful to me seven years before. I remarked to my wife, 'I must give Brendan a call tomorrow,' singling out one person as he had been a most useful contact first time round. I had not spoken to him in seven years, and wasn't even sure that I still had his contact details.

"The following morning my mobile phone rang and it was Brendan who, to my astonishment, said, 'I was just thinking of you last night and wondering how you are.' Mind you, by that stage I wasn't surprised. Strange coincidences, extraordinary aromas, the appearance of interviewees as if from nowhere, and the feeling that the book was being directed from elsewhere, marked out the writing of my two Padre Pio books. I always say, 'Whatever you might think of the stigmata or miraculous powers of Padre Pio, there was something remarkably powerful and

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President's Message: Change of Command, But Journey Continues

I want to begin my "Acting President's Message" by expressing my deep gratitude and appreciation for the tireless work and guidance that our past president, Rev. Karen Herrick, Ph.D., has performed on behalf of the Academy. She has stepped down from her duties as president due to her ever increasing work schedule in her private practice and as a result of the ongoing demands of having to deal with a myriad of agencies and representatives of the state, county, and federal levels involving the elevation of her home as a result of the damages her home had suffered as a result of "non-hurricane" Sandy, and its lingering administrative after effects.



Wilson

I also want to thank Karen, personally and publically, for having introduced me to ASCS some years ago and encouraging me to join this wonderful organization (for which I am eternally grateful). Karen will remain active with our organization, however, and will continue her "Spirituality Matters" column for our online newsletter as well as continuing to serve in other capacities.

I feel extremely excited and energized about the present and future of ASCS due in no small part, to the vision and contributions of members of our advisory board, board of directors, and most important our members, not to mention the effect that the success of our 2014 Scottsdale "Recent Developments in Afterlife Communication Conference," and the upcoming, "Life in the Afterlife Conference," which promises to be an even greater success also taking place in Scottsdale September 24-27, has had on our growing prestige and membership.

Another factor contributing to the excitement surrounding ASCS can be attributed to the overwhelming success of the "Aspects of Consciousness Conference" held in the Chapel Hill/ Durham, North Carolina area this past June. That conference offered three simultaneous conferences at once, touching upon three separate aspects of consciousness tied together by a greater vision of reality of which we are all a part. This conference recognized sponsoring organizations. It drew kindred spirits of this greater reality together to share in a united vision of a glimpse of what it is that connects us.

I see the three-pronged North Carolina Conference, offering as it did, three simultaneous programs and encouraging the participation of any number of organizations to sponsor and attend the conference and to share their independent vision with other attendees and other sponsoring organizations as a model for the future. It is my vision that the Academy will actively pursue, and include on its board of directors, members of these and other organizations – all of whom are on the same journey of discovery, so that our ever growing vision will encourage all forms of exploration while being ever mindful of the fact that our "answers" may be ever changing as our understanding of "reality" grows.

My guiding philosophy is best described in a quotation by Daniel J. Boorstin who stated that "The greatest obstacle to discovery is not ignorance; it is the illusion of knowledge."

I request that you share this journey of discovery with us, and that you invite others to join what Craig Hogan describes as a journey to discover "the glorious truths about what we are and what reality is" – a journey whose goal is "to shed light on the ineffable while luxuriating in the wonder and awe of what we cannot ever fully comprehend."

– William E. Wilson

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Searchlight Media Watch



Tom and Lisa Butler, NST

Mistaking Evidence as Fraud: According to the Wikipedia article about researcher Charles Richet (1850-1935): “In 1954, the Society for Psychical Research member Rudolf Lambert published a report revealing details about a case of fraud that was covered up by many early members of the Institute Metapsychique International (IMI). Lambert... discovered photographs depicting fraudulent ectoplasm.... Various “materializations” were artificially attached to Eva Carrière’s hair by wires. (photograph right) ... [IMI] members ... knew about the fraudulent photographs but were firm believers in mediumship phenomena so demanded the scandal be kept secret.”



This Wikipedia article was actually written in December of 2014. It is clear that it is written to make it seem that fraud did occur, when in reality, there is no evidence of fraud. Some of the pictures appear to show threads and faces with a flat appearance. These ambiguities were used as evidence of trickery, even though no mechanisms for proof of the trickery were found. A number of rebuttals were published in the IMI, including an eyewitness report by the photographer. Nevertheless, the Wikipedia article cites no such alternative views.

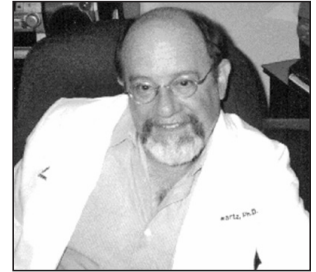
Modern examples of ectoplasm frequently show threads of the sticky material stuck to surfaces as if fastened there. Author Renaud Evrard asks at the end of his report about the article, “Was it appropriate to base a charge of fraud on hard-to-check testimonies, a long time after the death of the main protagonists, rather than on concrete available evidence?”

From: “Wikipedia, Lambert, and IMI’s “Concealed Fraud” by Renaud Evrard, Mindfield, December 2014, Parapsychological Association, parapsych.org. Also see: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Richet

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Spirit Shows Light: Well-known mediumship researcher Gary Schwartz has developed a technique whereby faint light can be detected in a totally dark box. Measurements are taken at the beginning of an experimental session, and then a specific “hypothesized spirit collaborator” is asked

to show a “spirit light” in the box and a second reading is taken. The conclusion that “It appears that instructions for specific spirits to enter a light sensing system can be associated with reliable increases in the apparent measurement of photons” suggests those communicating from the other side are able to hear, respond and produce light in an otherwise dark enclosure.



From: The Sacred Promise: *How Science Is Discovering Spirit’s Collaboration with Us in Our Daily Lives*, by Gary E. Schwartz, Ph.D., Atria Books, 2011. See: Photonic Measurement of Apparent Presence of Spirit Using a Computer Automated System” by Gary E. Schwartz, Ph.D. 2011, drgaryschwartz.com

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Consciousness: Is consciousness generated by the activity of the brain or is it a fundamental property of the universe? The Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS) research team has been studying this question for several years using various kinds of optical systems. Their latest experiments, published recently in the journal *Physics Essays* confirm their earlier findings. This line of research suggests that consciousness may play a key role in how the physical world manifests. This does not mean human consciousness literally “creates” reality, but it does suggest that there is more to consciousness than is implied in today’s neuroscience textbooks.



When we observe an everyday object, meaning an object that can be adequately described using classical physics, the act of observation does not influence the object’s properties. This is not the case when observing a quantum system. The behavior of quantum objects is exquisitely reactive to the act of observation; this sensitivity can easily be seen whenever a quantum object is measured. The measurement causes the quantum wave-like behavior to change into particle-like behavior.

A controversial interpretation of this effect—that consciousness itself is responsible for collapsing the quantum wave-function—was proposed by mathematician John von Neumann

and supported by other prominent physicists. Much has been debated about this “quantum measurement problem” from philosophical and theoretical perspectives; IONS is taking a more pragmatic approach by explicitly testing von Neumann’s idea, and in their latest paper, they report the results of three experiments which all showed results consistent with von Neumann’s proposal.

From: “Series of Experiments Shed Light on the Role of Consciousness,” by Dean Radin, Noetic Now, 2014, noetic.org/blog/dean-radin/double-slit-experiment-published

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Retrocausal Effects: Volunteers were given a questionnaire designed to determine if they were intuitive or rational thinkers. They were then presented with randomly chosen shapes and instructed to either respond or not respond, depending on the shape. In a second task, participants only had to respond to one shape. This shape was randomly chosen from the two that were used in the first task.

After the second task, reaction times to the shapes in the first task were compared and the reaction time for the one selected for the second task was about 2% shorter. The reaction time in the first task would normally have been the same for each shape. According to the researchers, the study seemed to “confirm the growing literature on retroactive influences on cognition and emotions, where future events seem to have an anomalous, retroactive influence on responses and behavior in the present.”

The participants scoring the highest in intuitive thinking accounted for virtually all of the effect.

From: Dick J. Bierman and Aron Bijl, “Anomalous ‘Retrocausal’ Effects On Performance in a Go/Nogo Task,” *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, Vol. 28, 9/30/2014

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Can Tweets Predict Heart Health? A new study out of the University of Pennsylvania says they can. Your tweets reflect your current state of mind, and certain emotions, like anger, stress, exhaustion and frustration and can increase your likelihood of cardiovascular disease. How do you measure a population’s mental state? Researchers are doing it by looking at Twitter. Billions of people use Twitter to vent, exclaim, complain, rejoice and share. So there is a lot of data showing what people are feeling.

Researchers looked at tweets by geographic



area, focusing on both positive and negative key words like “hate” and “wonderful” and mapped them. They then compared their findings with heart disease rates in the same areas. They claim Twitter was better able to predict mortality from cardiovascular disease than a traditional model which looks at demographic, socioeconomic and health risk factors combined. This is certainly a reminder that we should watch what we are saying

From: “Can Your Twitter Predict Your Heart Health?” Yes Five, 1-23-2015, yesfive.net

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A Successful Life: Arianna Huffington was named by *Forbes* magazine in 2014 as the 52nd most powerful woman in the world. Huffington launched *The Huffington Post* in 2005. It was sold to AOL in 2011. Huffington writes that “More and more people are realizing we’re living our lives in a way that’s not sustainable.” She says that, in our working culture, busyness and sleep deprivation are held up by some as a badge of honor.



Huffington

She cites a study from the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, showing that sleep deprivation reduces our emotional intelligence, self-regard, assertiveness, sense of independence, empathy toward others, the quality of our interpersonal relationships, positive thinking and impulse control. She writes about how stress affects our rates of disease and about how “It’s not an exaggeration to call meditation a miracle drug.”

A key path towards fulfillment, she argues, is through empathy and giving. “If our life’s journey is to evolve as human beings, there is no faster way to do it than through giving and service.” The view of “man as an exclusively material being” has dominated how we live our lives and what we consider success, Huffington says. “But today this is all changing. We have increasingly come to realize that there are other dimensions to living a truly successful life.”

From: “Arianna Huffington: ‘New science is validating ancient wisdom’” by Seán Dagan Wood, 2014, positivenews.org.uk/2014/wellbeing/16269/arianna-huffington-new-science-validating-ancient-wisdom/

It is impossible that anything so natural, so necessary, and so universal as death should ever have been designed by Providence as an evil to mankind.
— Jonathan Swift

Wind of the Western Sea

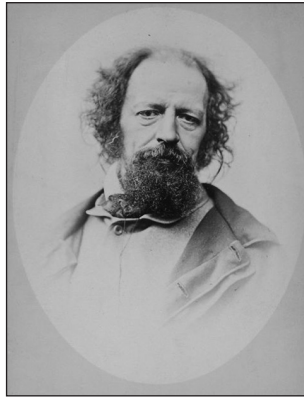
by Rick Darby

As far back as childhood, I periodically recalled this phrase:

Low, low, breathe and blow,
Wind of the western sea!

It didn't have the quality of just another old but ordinary memory, like something a grade-school teacher had once said. The words had a haunting quality. Although clear, they seemed to come from very far away in time, wrapped in an aura of strange significance.

Adding yet another coat of oddity, the words ringing in my mind were set to music. I could have, still can, hum the tune (no doubt off-pitch). After I began studying psychical research, it occurred to me at some point that the phrase might be a legacy of a previous incarnation. Something about it suggested 19th century England, which has always exerted a special fascination for me.



Tennyson

A mystery that would never be solved in this life — that was the state of play until not long ago. And then magical information technology arose. Not expecting any meaningful result, I Googled the phrase. And was properly astonished at what I learned.

The words are from a poem titled "The Princess: Sweet and Low" by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. I am keen on Tennyson. It says a lot about the good taste of the Victorians, who are much abused in our day, that they recognized and honored his brilliance. But I have read only a fraction of his prolific output, and didn't remember "The Princess: Sweet and Low" at all.

Of course, when I learned the source of my faint memory, I considered possible non-paranormal explanations. I might have read it in school or college, although I never took a class specific to Tennyson. I doubt that my largely wasted education introduced me to any but his really famous poems, like "In Memoriam" and "Ulysses."

I grew up in a house with lots of books, but I remembered no Tennyson anthology.

I asked my mother recently if we had had some volume when I was growing up that might have included the poem. She thought not, although there was a collection of English literature. But it seems unlikely it would have contained a relatively obscure piece like "The Princess: Sweet and Low,"

or that I would have run across it, or been taken by its mother-and-child theme.

So, locked on target: a probable past-life memory! I have had almost no paranormal experiences in my life, but this one seemed to be a cracker.

Until, that is, the next time I phoned my mother. She had looked up the poem, and remembered often singing it to me as a lullaby to soothe me into sleep. This began when I was perhaps six months old, she said. My long-cherished theory fell apart. It was a case of cryptomnesia, wherein something once known is forgotten by the conscious mind, but much later emerges, usually under hypnosis. Skeptics maintain that all so-called past life regressions are based on the phenomenon — a few facts or a story plot long hidden in the depths of the psyche, woven into a dramatic "earlier incarnation" when encouraged by the hypnotist.

But as I said, the fragment from Tennyson popped up many times throughout the years, and not while I was hypnotized. I now accept the cryptomnesia explanation, but it remains puzzling. Why did these particular words linger and recur when I have no conscious memories of other, and probably more significant, events of that period in my remote past? If my mother is right about the timing, I would not even have understood the words.

Many researchers say that children remember bits of past incarnations up to about the age of seven, the memories then fading out as they are replaced by new experiences in the present life. Did Tennyson's lines make such an impression because they reminded my then-little self of something remembered at the time from another life?

Maybe that's another fantasy, ginned up to compensate for the loss of my previous paranormal explanation. Or a scrap of another time and place, carried in my soul, on the wind of an unknown western sea.

Ponder on This

"I suppose we are all apt to fancy our own power of discernment and of sound judgment to be somewhat better than our neighbors'. But after all, is it not the common-sense, the care, the patience, and the amount of uninterrupted attention we bestow upon any psychical phenomena we are investigating that gives value to the opinion at which we arrive, and not the particular cleverness or skepticism of the observer? The lesson we all need to learn is that what even the humblest of men affirm from their own experience, is always worth listening to, but what even the cleverest of men, in their ignorance, deny is never worth a moment's attention."

— Sir William Barrett

PADRE PIO

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strange about this man!"

In your "Heading For The Light" you adroitly tackle the relevant issues pertaining to the scholarship of paranormal psychology and quite impressively also reach upwardly to the question of "how am I connected in this life – whether during an NDE or otherwise – to the Divine Essence of who I am." Did your experience of researching and writing about Padre Pio elevate the whole issue for you into the realm of spiritual growth and transformation?

"Your question is an important one. Ultimately, whether writing about Padre Pio or near-death experiences, the bottom line has always been about man's divine essence and spiritual core. I am constantly taken aback by the transformation of people following their near-death experiences – the love that enters their lives, concern for others, rejection of greed and pursuit of material possessions, desire for honesty and integrity in their dealings with fellow human beings, their general desire to live good lives.

"They believe it is these spiritual attributes that bring meaning to their existence on earth, drawing them closer to God. Padre Pio, too, was undoubtedly 'close to God.' The many people I spoke to who knew him, met him or watched him say Mass or distribute Holy Communion knew they were in the presence of a man who was in touch with the Divine. I always hope that those who read my books, whether about Padre Pio or near-death experiences, will get the underlying message – that there is more to life than the pursuit of material things and that, ultimately, the road to a happy death is paved with our goodness and kindness to others."

In each of your last half-dozen books you have mentioned "The Light" in association with what one is likely to experience either during an NDE or in other altered states as well as when discussing what one may well be slated to encounter subsequent to one's physical death. With respect to your sustained focus on this matter how do you respond to what the Apostle Thomas heard his spiritual Master telling him that he recorded in his Secret Gospel: "If they say to you, 'Where did you come from?' say to them, 'We come from the light, the place where the light came into being by itself, and was revealed through their image.'"

"Thomas is right – the light is everything, as I mentioned earlier. Those who return from near-death experiences are certain that the ultimate source of wisdom and goodness is either in the light, behind the light or is the light. Often struggling to explain what they mean, they associate the

luminescence with a 'being', a 'superior being' or even a 'being of light'. Although extremely bright, the light doesn't overpower them and doesn't hurt their eyes; instead, it is warm and comforting. Its rays light up the journey and its magnificence draws people to it. It is their final port of call, their journey's end, the place where they all want to be.

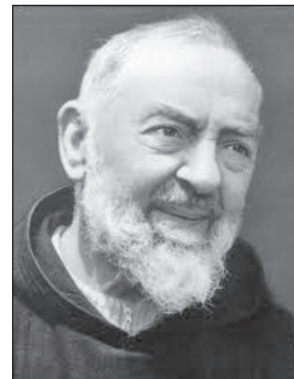
"While it is at the core of Christianity, Islam also attributes a central importance to the luminosity and brilliance of Allah. 'Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth' is perhaps the most profound declaration of Islam. It is the opening line of the Koran's famous 'Light Verse' or 'Parable of Light.'

"The world's third most popular religion, Hinduism, is also grounded in light. Krishna, one of the most popular and widely revered deities in India, is likened to light and described as 'a mass of light shining everywhere with the radiance of flaming fire and the sun.'

"So, yes, if I were to choose the single most important element of what our life and death, and our afterlife, is all about, it is the light. As one of my interviewees said, 'I firmly believe I was crossing over to the other side. And I know that the light was real. All I was interested in was the light. It was the only place I wanted to be. There was nothing else that mattered.'"

What additional research and writing or broadcasting projects are you planning to undertake as you further explore what awaits us when we transition from our life on earth to the Other World of spirit?

"I base my books, as much as I can, on credible anecdotal evidence allied to the best of scientific research. To that extent, I tend to bring my readers to the borders between life and death, and I seldom go beyond. For example, I have never entered the world of mediums, ghosts or other afterlife communications. However, I am currently writing a book on where we go after death and what our existence might be like – the story of heaven and hell, if you would like to refer to it as that. It is hard, but rewarding, work. It may well be the concluding – and even definitive – book produced by me on after-death themes, although my wife tells me I always say that!" 🐦



Padre Pio

Our Book Horizon

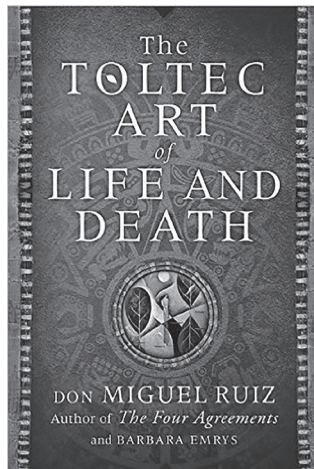
Books are the carriers of civilization. — Barbara Tuchman



In September and October, publishers will be releasing more than 50 new titles of interest to various segments of the ASCS community. They encompass religion, parapsychology, healing, science, and spiritual practices and experiences of great variety.

In our online discussion group (<http://ascsi2.ning.com/group/book-reviews>), the subject of religious indoctrination and creeds often surfaces. A new book by Mark W. Gura, executive director of the nonprofit Association of Mindfulness Meditation and Secular Buddhism, will be released by InnerAction Press LLC in late October. *Blind Faith Vaccine: Countering Religious Indoctrination* takes up the subject of the way traditional cultures shape our beliefs and addresses the reality that an overwhelming new accessibility to information about many different cultures tends to drive a confused population back to traditional creeds. Dr. Michael Arnhem, a London barrister and former classics professor, deals with the inadequate extremes of both atheism and organized religion in *The God Book*, which is due from Imprint Academic on October 1. Philosopher Dr. John D. Caputo's *Hoping Against Hope: Confessions of a Postmodern Pilgrim* (Fortress Press, Oct. 1) has produced what one critic calls Caputo's "spiritual autobiography," and a gift. He describes his own journey from a 1950s-era Catholic altar boy through the "death of god" to his current desire to redeem and reinvent religion for a postmodern world.

The ongoing fascination with near-death experiences continues with many new titles appearing in the coming months. In *The Toltec Art of Life and Death: A Story of Discovery* (HarperElixir, Oct. 27) Don Miguel Ruiz relates his own journey between this world and the next after a heart attack left him in a coma for nine weeks. John Burke and Don Piper have collected 100 near-death experience accounts for *Imagine Heaven: Near-Death Experiences, God's Promises, and the Exhilarating Future That Awaits You* (Baker Books, Oct. 20). Chiropractic doctor Mary Helen Hensley tells her



story of a journey to a place of light after a car accident in *Promised by Heaven: A Doctor's Return from the Afterlife to the Destiny of Love and Healing* (Atria Books: Sept. 8). A new fortieth-anniversary edition of Raymond Moody's classic *Life After Life* is arriving September 8 from HarperOne, now with the subtitle "The Bestselling Original Investigation That Revealed 'Near-Death Experiences'."

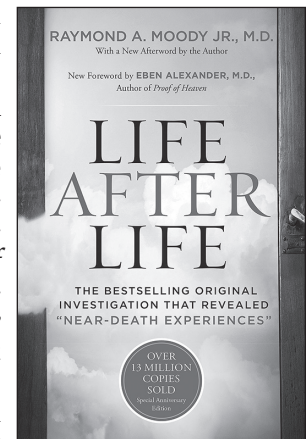
One new title offers an interesting variant on the near-death genre. Wayne Dyer and Dee Garnes illuminate the concept of pre-life memories in *Memories of Heaven: Children's Astounding Recollections of the Time Before They Came to Earth* (Hay House, Inc., Oct. 13). Dyer and Garnes collected stories from parents all over the world of small children who described dialogues with God, the selection of their own parents, and relationships with long-deceased family members.

Parapsychology has a new guidebook and winner of the Parapsychological Association Book Award in *Parapsychology: A Handbook for the 21st Century* (McFarland Books, Jul. 31), edited by Etzel Cardeña, John Palmer, and David Marcusson-Clavertz. Cambridge Scholars Publishing is releasing John Poynton's *Science, Mysticism and Psychical Research: The Revolutionary Synthesis of Michael Whiteman*, due out September 15. This is the first unabridged edition of this study of the work of the late Michael Whiteman, a mathematician who synthesized these three concepts generally thought to be irreconcilable.

Let me also encourage ASCS members to join the conversation in progress on our discussion group regarding the meanings we attach to the term "New Age." Many of the books we are attracted to are now or have been in the past displayed in the New Age sections of bookstores, while some of us embrace the term and others spurn it. So, as we embrace or spurn it, what is it? Please weigh in.

Enjoy your September/October reading, and let us all know of treasures you're finding.

— Donna Cox Baker, Ph.D.
(donnacoxbaker@att.net)



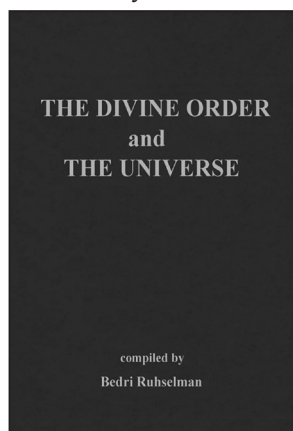
The Divine Order and the Universe, compiled by Bedri Ruhselman. Divine Order Publishing, 2014, 326 pp.

This unusual book is a compilation by Bedri Ruhselman of communiqués issued from beings identified as the Plan of Sublime Duty and named “Önder” (Pioneer) in 1959. They were preserved in the safes of notaries and banks for 54 years, before being published in 2014. The book is a faithfully translated version of the original Turkish text.

Ruhselman was the founder of spiritualism in Turkey and the founding member of the Metapsychic Investigations and Scientific Research Society in 1950. He died in 1960. There is no information available as to who the “beings” are, or how many of them prepared the book. The book, which contains no index or table of contents, is separated into three sections. The first section is untitled. The second section is entitled: “WORLD, DISHARMONY, HARMONY.” The final and most interesting section has a very lengthy caption: “YOU, WHO CAN BE YOU WITH MATTER AND NOTHING WITH EVERYTHING AND CAN ADAPT TO THE HARMONY OF THIS EVERYTHING, LONG FOR THE MOMENT WHEN YOU WILL BE OF THAT HARMONY.”

The first section, which incorporates a great amount of detail, is complicated and would be very appealing to a quantum physicist. The main theme of the book is that mankind is in a constant state of evolution, but unlike other spiritually suggested books, does not claim that we are seeking to return to God. In fact, the word “God” appears only once:

“The factor which determines the endless evolution of spirits also governs the truth that spirits will never attain the original principle. And the factor determining that spirits will never be able to attain the original principle is the imperative of the unattainability of unattainability which is above everything – even its smallest relation to everything that is the whole of wholes is out of the question – and which is impossible to express by any name for all that cannot enter our minds, imaginations, feelings, but here, for the sake of exigency, we will mention a word without considering any of its connotations – ‘Allah’ [God]. Accepting this truth as it is, without hesitation and without making it a subject of discussion, is the greatest of the imperatives and also the only direction of the path of deliverance.”



A one page insert was included in the book, which provided a listing of major categories within:

The unending rain of knowledge starting from spirit and matter.

The new description of time and structure of the universe.

The true comprehension of love; the advance from love towards the essence.

Discovering existential freedom and planetary awakening.

The implications of global warming, floods and earthquakes.

The lessons we learn from natural events.

Inevitable effects of a huge planet approaching from another system to our solar system.

Spiritual preparation through predicted facts about inevitable natural events.

The authors describe mankind’s evolutionary spiritual journey as an effort similar to becoming in essence the board of directors of the universe’s largest corporation, and to get there, mankind has to successfully complete a plethora of qualifying tasks.

The authors report mankind’s latest journey to have begun only 70,000 years ago, when the earth went through monumental physical changes, and all existing civilizations were destroyed, so mankind could begin again. Apparently, this is an ongoing cycle that has happened hundreds of thousands of times, every 60,000 to 70,000 years, and the next cycle is near. This book made some interesting predictions, which were to begin within the next 50 to 60 years after 1959. These included torrential rains, vast floodings, sea rises, major droughts, and earthquakes. All of which should be happening now—and they are. We are, supposedly, in the beginning stages of the next ending cycle for mankind and the earth, as it stands now. In fact, the earth’s axis is to begin tilting another 13 degrees in the not-too-distant future.

It seems the stories of Atlantis may represent the ending of the last cycle. It also is a shame that with each new cycle, mankind has to start from scratch (as a caveman), with no prior knowledge of past civilizations. There is no explanation offered as to why mankind cannot continue where it last left off, other than every event that occurs is part of the master plan of mankind’s evolution.

I leave it to the reader to make up his or her own mind as to where we are headed, but if I had a vote, I’d elect a new board of directors, as I prefer the afterlife that has been described in great detail by other spirits, who have been identified and seem credible. Many spirits like to taunt mankind, so I am not convinced of the efficacy of the Voyagers of Destiny (even though much of what they predicted 56 years ago is now happening).

– Paul J. Hauser, J.D.
(pauljhauser@gmail.com)

The Afterlife Healing Circle: How Anyone Can Contact the Other Side, by Candace L. Talmadge and Jana L. Simons, New Page Books, Pompton Plains, NJ, 2015, 192 pp.

Candace Talmadge and Jana Simons describe a technique they have developed through which they say an individual (the “inquirer”) can contact souls who have been close to them and have passed on to the afterlife. Through their group process, an inquirer can also communicate with not-yet-born offspring.

Talmadge and Simons call their book “a how-to manual with enough context to explain the why-to, when-to, and where-to. You need not be an expert or medium, or even think of yourself as specially gifted in any way, to conduct or participate in the afterlife healing circle.”

The circle involves a small group of two to five participants plus invited friends or relatives of the inquirer. This is not a traditional séance. Rather than messages being transmitted by a medium, information from the out-of-body soul is received via the intuitive faculties of the group members, and “the person who issues instructions and keeps the healing circle on track is called the conductor.”

Besides the standard-issue five senses — sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell — we have four additional, nonphysical senses: “We call them ‘soul senses’ because they are some of the abilities of the spiritual body, or unconscious mind. ... The soul senses are also the primary means by which we are able to apply the principles of love, connection, and trust. We need the soul senses to invoke and feel the presence of love-energy. We also require these non-physical senses to detect the presence of the soul(s) to whom we wish to speak, as that consciousness does not come attached to a physical body. We also need to learn to trust the information we receive through our soul senses no matter how illogical or strange it may seem.”

Here are bonsai versions of the authors’ explanations of the soul senses:

Soul awareness — “arrives as an instantaneous awareness about some situation or person, even if we’ve only just met the person or encountered the circumstances. We know, but we can’t explain why we know or how we became aware.”

Soul feeling — “manifests as physical sensations on or within the body and are especially strong

in the area of the solar plexus, but can be located anywhere. ... As we pay closer attention and our ability to detect soul feelings improves, we begin to take note of a particular sensation and what event or sensation it preceded.”

Soul vision — “shows itself either as pictures inside the head or as a visualization that appears external to self.”

Soul understanding — “is just that: it arrives as an understanding. Soul understanding also conveys words or phrases that are heard either inside the head or as spoken words.”

Using these internal receptors, participants share impressions of the soul whose presence is requested. Talmadge and Simons provide samples of the healing circle in action, involving post-mortem and pre-birth spirits.

Some of the book’s material adds a metaphysical and philosophical framework to the accounts of healing circle spirit communications. There is, for instance, a chapter about spirit guides — so often mentioned these days, but whose nature is mysterious to many. Conditions of consciousness on the other side are suggested.

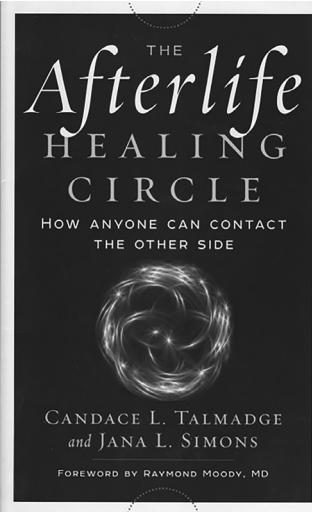
While it makes sense to broaden the discussion beyond the anecdotal, the “big picture” supplement includes some squishy bits.

“In the eastern half of the world, the majority of people are strongest in soul awareness and soul feeling, whereas people in the western part of the globe are just the opposite — predominantly strongest in soul vision and soul understanding,” Talmadge and Simons declare. Such a division can scarcely be supported except as their own opinion.

In general, the authors seem not to be very familiar with the vast literature of psychical research. They describe *psychokinesis* as interactions with spirits that produce “phenomena such as phone calls from the dead, apparitions, boat-shaped clouds, or the smell of dirt inside a room where none is evident.” While many terms in *psi* are by their nature hard to define, the consensus meaning of psychokinesis is action on matter by living minds. Blurring the concept in this way is not helpful.

The few citations are from recent publications and writers (e.g., “a bestselling book by Dr. Raymond Moody,” “Another bestselling author, James Twyman”). The authors plug the superiority of their method: “Anyone can rig up a floating horn or an ‘ethereal’ voice in the dark, but no one, however well-versed in deceptive practices, can fake the feelings” of the inquirer and other participants in a healing circle. But physical mediumship is by no means always deceptive; many well-authenticated cases are on record for those who care to study them. The authors’ credibility gains nothing by trashing other types of afterlife communication.

— Rick Darby, M.A.
(reflight@gmx.com)



Christianity and Reincarnation, by Rudolf Frieling (trans. By Rudolf & Margaret Koehler), Floris Books, 2015/1977 (2nd revised ed.), 117 pp.

This book examines the biblical evidence for the concept of reincarnation—the belief that the soul survives after death and is reborn in the body of another person or some other living thing. The word reincarnation means “coming back into the flesh” and is also called “transmigration of the soul.”

Author Frieling (1901-86) was one of the founders of The Christian Community—a group that incorporates the possibility of reincarnation into its Christian study—and is the author of many books on Christian thinking. He demonstrates effectively how esoteric Christianity was brought to life again through the thinking of Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), an Austrian-born philosopher. Steiner founded a spiritual movement called Anthroposophy, which claims that individuals can develop the ability to access divine wisdom using imagination and intuition—an idea later supported by Carl Jung.

Frieling asserts that the New Testament can only be understood properly through this intuitive lens, with a further recognition that certain concepts were common knowledge when the texts were compiled, if obscure to later audiences. St. Paul, for example, spoke of a “third heaven” (2 Cor. 12: 2), presupposing a first and second heaven—ideas familiar in the New Testament era. Similarly, Frieling says, the biblical text should be read with the recognition that reincarnation was commonly accepted in the pre-Christian era.

According to Frieling, the belief in reincarnation was instinctive to Jesus’ contemporaries. He asserts that all religions are based upon original experience of higher worlds. The Kabbalah, the mystical side of Judaism, teaches reincarnation. Jesus’ assertion that Elijah was John the Baptist reincarnated (Matt. 11: 14) links the religions of the Old and New Testaments.

Frieling contends that reincarnation will be understood by those who have the ears to hear it. In John 9, one of Jesus’ disciples asked if a man born blind was being punished, which implies a conception that the man could have sinned in an earlier life. Paul’s statement that whatever a man sows he

will also reap (Gal. 6: 7) describes the ancient law of karma—a law that presumed a person had repeated earthly lives.

Ideas that were taken for granted in the New Testament—heavens, angels, demons, the realm of the dead, and reincarnation—have been undermined by the advent of materialism. Frieling points out that one who approaches the New Testament with a materialistic worldview will not understand it. He suggests that the new worldview Christ brought provides the lens with which to see.

The old, physical worldview began with man created from dust and then given breath, which is followed by the dividing into two sexes (Gen. 2). In partaking of the fruit of a tree that they were told would bring death, they became conscious of nakedness. Frieling interpreted nakedness as a condition in which a person is only seen in the physical and not through a spirit or soul perception. This is how we “fell.” We fell into the “isolation of self-centered egotism” of the physical.

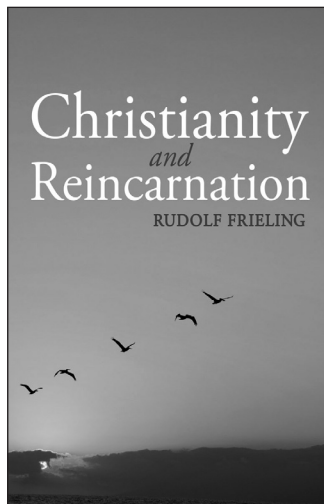
When Christ came to earth, he brought a “selfless ego” with the power of love. This advent was part of the creation of the world, a “second act of creation” that activated the power of selfless love on the planet. The earth experience of Christ, to have its maximal effect, required that he die—a voluntary sacrifice. It is this model of selfless love, according to Frieling, that spiritual people are supposed to follow.

Frieling points out that while Christ lived out his earthly incarnation, he was preparing to die, and that the deeds he performed for others were signs to prepare them for what was to come. Christ’s death and resurrection showed spiritual powers overcoming the physical. The mystery that was being enacted, however, was a bit lost on the disciples for the time being. They could not follow it with full consciousness. In the decades after Christ’s death and rising, they grew into an understanding of the meaning. They began to see that Christ intuitively “knew” that in his death a higher life would come to him, as it would to the rest of mankind.

In this book, readers who have studied reincarnation and the Bible will recognize the usual stories that are used as “proof” that reincarnation is a biblical concept. The true beauty of this book is how Frieling describes what certain biblical passages really mean. He tells us about how the people of those times lived and explains how visions of spiritual events were and are misunderstood and wrongly taken to refer to events on earth.

This book is definitely worth reading and one that you might want to read again and again because of the details of Christian history. I intend to do that after I read a bit more on Rudolph Steiner.

—Karen E. Herrick, Ph.D.
(karen@karenherrick.com)

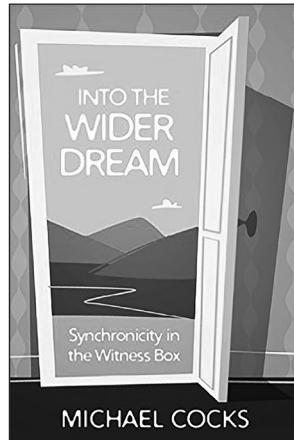


Into the Wider Dream: Synchronicity in the Witness Box, by Michael Cocks, White Crow Books, Hove, UK, 2015, 226 pp.

Reverend Michael Cocks has followed up his channelled book on Stephen the Martyr with a perceptive exploration of Fate and synchronicity. The book opens with a brief but fascinating account of how earlier societies viewed The Fates. Clearly there is something in the human psyche that has induced people through the ages to believe that there are many earthly events that are simply beyond human control, some coinciding to produce favorable outcomes (synchronicity) and some less favorable or disastrous ones. The central question that this book explores is: Are these events simply the result of chance, or do they represent earthly consequences of Fate, karma, or predestination ordained by a Higher Power? Tarot cards and the I-Ching testify to the belief in both West and East in what the author calls “faith in a hidden reality, where Meaning governs the affairs of the world, and is beyond the reach of cause and effect.”

Searching for some rationalization of synchronicity, the author describes (in simple language) some of the basic ideas of quantum mechanics, including numinous concepts like David Bohm’s implicate order, C.G. Jung’s collective unconscious, Rupert Sheldrake’s morphogenetic field and Karl Pribram’s holographic brain. These ideas all represent a quantum-like holistic interpretation of the divine Cosmic Spirit. In the manner of Neale Donald Walsh, Cocks asks questions of the divine Source. He recounts examples of coincidence that he encounters in his exploration of this subject and alights on Arthur Koestler’s “holons” – entities complete in themselves and yet part of something still bigger and more complex, like cells and organs as entities that work synchronously within the human body.

The author then relates the teachings of St. Stephen recorded in his previous book to the world of coincidence and synchronicity. He presents us with a 50-page chapter recording a 20-year series of dreams and their interpretation involving UFOs and synchronicity: here, we have the nub of *The Wider Dream*. Not many people take the trouble to record their dreams or to become so aware, or mindful, in everyday life that they can relate their dreams to events. This is an invaluable study of synchronicity and the nature of Oneness for this reason alone. Whilst an interpretation in terms of UFOs is an easy



target for derision, sightings have been reported by various individuals of different nations for many centuries, even if it is difficult for those who have no personal and direct evidence to believe in them. The same can be said of any channelled information, but support from earthly events validates much that purports to originate from Spirit.

More often than not dreams contain metaphors, rather than being literal, and these are likely to be the ones that teach us something. The author has referred to the metaphorical nature of his dreams, and he has interpreted them in a way that resonates with him. Dreams are very personal so probably the dreamer alone can interpret them in any meaningful way based on our own experiences.

When someone feels that the dreams (and metaphors) they experience have been channelled to them, it is not really possible to review the significance of what is written because it comes from what we believe to be the divine Cosmic Spirit. But we have to remember that often those things that are channelled personally to individuals (as opposed to channelling for a public audience) are likely to be tailored for each individual’s experience, perhaps to help them in living their life here on Earth, perhaps to help them in their spiritual development, or perhaps to help them with a specific critical situation. Such psychic communications are validated by their correspondence with verifiable facts.

The chapter also includes a meaningful description of Lawrence LeShan’s *Four Modes of Being (Alternate Realities: The Search for the Full Human Being)* (Ballantine Books). According to LeShan, the well-rounded person needs to function in four modes of being: sensory (using the rational mind), clairvoyant (using the subconscious or spiritual mind), transpsychic (using telepathy or empathy to communicate across space or time) and mythical (using myths to interpret other-worldly realities). These modes are I think crucial in understanding the author’s profound experiences.

The rest of the book describes further dream experiences and the interpretation of them and the events of everyday life in a synchronistic way. Michael Cocks has clearly thought very deeply about this where perhaps many people would not even be aware of the synchronicities in their lives. If you are spiritually inclined, perhaps Spirit intervenes more often in your life—through quantum entanglement?

There is a particularly useful final part, “Drawing The Threads Together,” that summarizes to what extent we can attribute synchronistic events to science (usually quantum science) and to what extent they can be interpreted as having some other-worldly pantheistic spiritual origin. The book concludes with Notes and an Index.

—Howard Jones, Ph.D.
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Speaking Christian: Why Christian Words Have Lost Their Meaning and Power and How They Can Be Restored, by Marcus J. Borg, Harper Collins Publishers, NY, 2014 (new in paperback), 248 pp.

Marcus Borg's stated purpose in writing this book is to "exposit an alternative understanding, one that draws on the Bible and premodern Christian tradition." He sets the stage for this book by his use of the Heaven-and-Hell concept. By this he means the understanding of Christianity, espoused by most Protestants and Catholics, that Jesus died for our sins and thereby we are forgiven and go to heaven instead of hell. Borg grew up with that belief but then later in life came to a broader understanding that being a Christian was more than the attainment of heaven or avoidance of hell. It was about one's behavior and life purpose – endeavors demonstrated in obedience to God's commandment to love one another.

Borg, a retired philosophy professor and *New York Times* bestselling author, is convinced that the traditional Christian language needs to be redeemed instead of replaced, having proven through history to be an effective road to transformation and compassion. In one of many examinations of a word's meaning in *Speaking Christian*, he analyzes the word "redeem," which in its origins meant to set free, to release from bondage. Redemption therefore could represent our personal need to be released from our own emotional and habitual bondage.

Literalism (the conviction that the Bible is the inerrant, inspired, and complete word of God) is a relatively recent belief, having come into common thought three centuries ago. Only in the late 1800s and early 1900s did "hard literalism" become common. About half of American Protestants—and the number is growing—remain literalists, which Borg cites as a "major reason that young people today have little or no interest in Christianity." He proposes a "softer" approach to the literalism that "narrows, reduces, flattens, and ultimately distorts the meaning of the Bible and Christianity." Language reflects its culture, therefore we can no longer govern our behavior solely on "what the Bible says," without examining what it meant and even

if it still applies. Certainly the Bible's counsel on the treatment of slaves can no longer be considered a justification for slavery in the modern world.

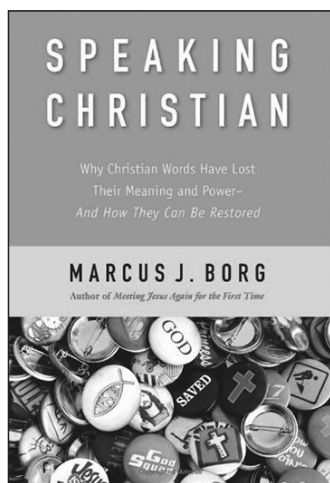
According to Borg, the value of Scripture lies in its metaphorical or etymological meaning. When it describes God as a rock or speaks of the "right hand of God," we recognize something more is meant. Literalism, however, tends to portray "salvation" as deliverance from sin and hell. Borg examines its Latin root "salve"—a restorative ointment—rendering "salvation" in its more esoteric meaning as the healing of "wounds of existence," bringing wholeness. Within the context of biblical stories, "salvation" also has a connotation of action, of being a salve to others in the promotion of justice and peace, both personally and in world affairs. Borg demonstrates that salvation could be considered reconnection, reconciliation, or a return to "one in whom we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28)—a transformation of ourselves and the world.

In a chapter dealing with sin, the author shows that the word "sin" derives from the Greek word "hubris"—puffing oneself up to inordinate size, attempting to be godlike. To sin is to make "one's self the center of the universe and the center of one's concern." This is not only true of individuals, Borg says, but also of nations and groups of people.

Borg also addresses the terms "forgiveness" and "repentance." He provides support for his belief that we are always and already forgiven and accepted of God, by whom we are loved unconditionally (Luther's "Radical Grace"). Repentance and forgiveness are of an etymological mix, since the original meaning of repentance was to turn away and return to, "seeing things in a new way and letting God reshape us. This often requires forgiveness. Two particularly profound chapters in this book are simply entitled "God" and "God's Character." Another one focusing on Jesus is especially noteworthy. In the last section of the book, Borg devotes several pages to discussion questions that would be very beneficial for group interaction on these profound issues.

This review cannot begin to cover the breadth and depth of the issues and concepts included in *Speaking Christian*. Borg also addresses such vital, complex, and at times controversial terms as "Bible," "Easter," "Righteousness," "Born Again," "The Only Way," "Heaven," "The Lord's Supper," and many more. For me personally, this book clarified and expanded the meaning of spiritual words that have been a stumbling-block for most of my life. I would highly recommend this book to anyone who is searching for a fuller spiritual experience and understanding of the great "all that is."

— Glenda Hawley, Ph.D.
(glenda2629@gmail.com)



A Good-Bye from Our Past President

As I step down from the president's position, I want to thank our members for their support during my tenure. I have very much enjoyed communicating with so many members and hearing about their spiritual experiences and synchronicities. I'll bow out here with some musings.

In his August 11 blog, Mike Tymn states that he was recently visiting the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History with his granddaughter and was wondering why there isn't a building devoted to psychical research. My answer is that most people are afraid of an unseen world so they avoid knowing it and talking about it. Paleontologists are much more respected than psychical researchers and parapsychologists because dinosaurs are extinct and no one needs fear meeting them when they die.



Herrick

During my training to become a minister, our class was asked how we would run a funeral for someone who was disliked – where the relatives were so relieved that this person had finally passed that most people at the funeral were happy. Just as there are some people here on earth we would rather not be around so there are spirits of people or ghosts that others do not want to meet again. I believe there will be choice there just as there is here but few people are willing to discuss members of their family who they would rather not meet. And, they may be afraid of meeting them.

I recently read a description of a soul entering a human body. It was stated that the soul is being prepared in a higher level of existence and when the time is right and the human is ready, the soul comes down "a fiery umbilical of energy called the silver thread." This happens like a nuclear reaction in which two or more atomic nuclei come very close and then collide at a very high speed and join to form a new type of atomic nucleus. When we die, of course, that silver cord is cut.

As we prepare to die, we do sleep a lot just as newborn babies do after they are born. It seems to me that this is why we have pain in our deteriorating body as we get "ready" to leave the material world. Otherwise, why would we ever want to leave? Dying takes a lot of pain in executing just as the labor we all experience of being born. It seems to me that

it takes work to get here and to leave here. It's easier for some than for others.

The vagus nerve has been getting a lot of press recently in the field of therapy. The good news is that through my readings I have discovered that the vagus nerve is also known as the soul-mind breath passageway or the silver cord. It is through this passageway that the ancient Egyptians were known as the "Twice Born Ones." Their initiation process of becoming twice born was to lie down inside a granite sarcophagus for the purpose of having an out-of-body experience. The soul then freed from the mortal body could begin to communicate with the other side and learn that the soul is indeed immortal.

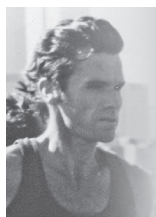
After much study, I now *know* that there is an unseen world of spirits – some previously occupying bodies on earth and some not – who help me every day to be more alert and grateful for my life while I'm here. You are in good hands with the present board. I look forward to meeting as many of you as I can at future ASCS events they sponsor and run.

– Karen E. Herrick, Ph.D.
(karen@karenherrick.com)

NEW MEMBERS



Linda McCarthy, Anthem, AZ
David Howard, Apache Junction, AZ
Catherine Preus, Mt. Shasta, CA
Beverly Hauptmann, Upper Lake, CA
Angeline Jackson, Pueblo, CO
Richard & Carolyn Rasche, Tucker, GA
Thomas Gilbert, East Longmeadow, MA
C. Barbara Smith, Churchville, MD
Robert & Suzanne Mays, Chapel Hill, NC
John Peter Griffin, Chapel Hill, NC
Ms. Merlin Walberg, Chapel Hill, NC
Richard Shepard, Chapel Hill, NC
Marilyn McNamara, Chapel Hill, NC
Michele Dubow, Durham, NC
Dr. Catherine Carstarphen, McAdenville, NC
Rose Marie Roth, Pittsboro, NC
Margaret Harrell, Raleigh, NC
Jeannie S. Whyte, Raleigh, NC
Sonia Jackson, Raleigh, NC
David Rowe, Princeton, NJ
Laura Burns, Chesterfield, VA



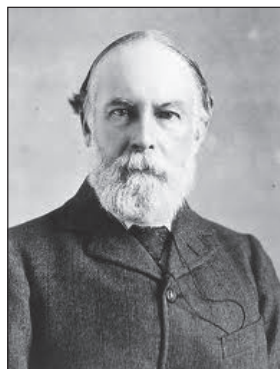
Practicing Death

To practice death is to practice freedom — Michel de Montaigne



Habitual Spiritual Consciousness

The term “practicing death” seems to have originated with Plato and, in effect, means to have death on one’s mind constantly, to embrace it, so that it doesn’t take us by surprise. Some erroneously interpret that to suggest that we should give up on this life and live for a future life. Addressing concerns that being too focused on the afterlife will make a person unfit for the “practical” life, philosopher Lilian Whiting pointed out that the truth is just the opposite. “Let one realize the absolute continuity of existence and at once life becomes worth living,” she offered.



Myers

Dr. Madison Peters, a Christian author of a century ago, put it this way: “Too many indeed hold the solemn verities concerning the hereafter in a sort of half consciousness, believing in them, yet nevertheless not fully realizing them. They must flame within us, setting our whole moral and intellectual nature on fire, sending a life current of energy through every part of our being, arousing us to impetuous action and to sustained effort born of strong conviction.”

A group of entities, dubbed the “Invisibles” by popular author Steward Edward White, communicated through the mediumship of White’s wife, Betty. They referred to the desired awareness of spiritual matters, including death, as “habitual spiritual consciousness.” Concerned that White might misunderstand and assume that they were saying that the focus should be entirely on the spiritual world, they explained: “This does not imply any retirement into some state of permanent abstraction, nor any priggish watchfulness to determine that your every move is transcendental. It means simply that each day, when you finish your practice, you do not close the experience like a book, but carry it around with you like a treasured possession. Instead of being completely forgotten, it remains in the back of your mind, communicating its influence automatically to your actions and reactions, and ready at any moment, if specifically called upon, to lend a helping hand.” They stressed that one must be able to deal with life’s adversities by viewing them from the

higher consciousness.

Frederic W. H. Myers, one of the founders of the Society for Psychical Research, is a good example of someone who was able to develop his spiritual consciousness to the point where, in practicing death, he found joy and fulfillment in life. At Myers’s memorial service in 1901, Sir Oliver Lodge recalled that Myers, when visiting the United States a few years earlier, swam the Niagara River below the treacherous falls. Myers told Lodge that the thought suddenly flashed upon him that he might die, but there was no fear connected with this thought. Rather, he saw the whole experience as a joyous adventure, for, as Lodge put it, “his clear and happy faith was the outcome entirely of his scientific researches” which strongly pointed to survival.

Present at Myers’s deathbed, Professor William James of Harvard wrote that “his serenity, in fact, his eagerness to go, and his extraordinary intellectual vitality up to the very time the death agony began, and even in the midst of it, were a superb spectacle and deeply impressed the doctors, as well as ourselves.”

In *The Broken Connection*, Robert Jay Lifton, a distinguished professor of psychiatry, says that we must “know death” in order to live with free imagination. He tells us that we have to be able to imagine it, to visualize it before we can accept the survival of consciousness. Therein is the failure of orthodox religion; there is nothing to visualize beyond harps and clouds. When we truly practice death, when we begin to absorb modern revelation – teachings coming to us through modern mediumship, near-death experiences, and other phenomena – we can visualize something, even though it may never be completely in focus. In so visualizing, we begin to comprehend the divine plan and formulate a paradigm that involves a Creative Force. We see how we are really souls occupying bodies rather than bodies housing souls and how our souls are progressing in finding their way back to Oneness with the Creator through the challenges, the adversities, the trials and tribulations offered us in a particular lifetime. We understand how a life without adversity offers little opportunity for growth. We come to appreciate the words of Mozart that “death, as we consider it closely, is the true goal of our existence.”

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The mission of The Academy for Spiritual and Consciousness Studies, Inc. is to discern, develop and disseminate knowledge of how consciousness studies and paranormal phenomena may relate to and enhance the development of the human spirit.

An Early NDE

In her 1917 book, *How I Know that the Dead Are Alive*, Fanny Ruthven Paget, a resident of Houston, Texas, wrote of her near-death experience, although not so-called at that time. The NDE apparently resulted from severe pneumonia, which she suffered from for several days during 1911.

"All about and above me I could see nothing, but fancy my astonishment if you can, when looking down, I saw my body resting peacefully on the bed, representing what is commonly called a 'dead person'," Paget recalled. "I could not move my eyes from it; it fascinated me as it lay in the cold whiteness, robed in a gown of lavender silk, with dainty laces and ruffles.... The deep blue 'windows of the soul,' the eyes, were at half mast; the soul being absent the light was gone; the lips slightly parted wore just a suggestion of a smile; the left hand rested lightly on the breast – the engagement ring scintillating as brightly as ever; the right, which no doubt had been lifted unconsciously at the shock of impact, had fallen a little apart from the body and lay, palm upturned. How peaceful it looked!"

Paget then concerned herself with her fiancé in another town and found herself being propelled by a vibratory sensation to his sleeping body. "As

I looked upon him I saw the shadow body more distinctly than the physical. Viewed from the other side of life, the 'shadow' body seemed the original and the physical the duplicate, the soul the real, the body the unreal. Within and interpenetrating all was a light, which I had not before perceived as being a part of the spiritual anatomy. This light penetrated from within, both the shadow and physical bodies, maintaining through and about the body an aura or illumination which enveloped it; clothing it, as it were, in a magnetized illumination. How wonderful this three-in-one life-manifestation seemed, especially when we generally recognize only the one – the physical!"

Paget began speaking to her fiancé, but quickly realized he could not see or hear her. She perceived "that the vibratory environment in which I was held did not harmonize with that which encompassed him, yet touched so intimately that even as I watched, I hoped for a harmonious blending of these vibratory waves, which gave the impression of 'cross currents' in the sea. Mine was the vibration of perpetual motion – his more like a 'dead sea' into which these vibratory currents ebbed and flowed."